DC #8

DIRECT CURRENTS

BOOKS SHIPPING SEPT 6 THRU SEPT 27

IN THIS ISSUE:

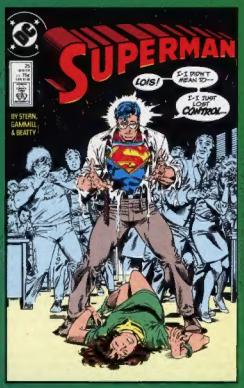
BATMAN
"A Death In The Family" continues

PLASTIC MAN
4-issue mini-series

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER
12-issue maxi-series

PLUS . . .

An interview with Dan Jurgens



Cover Of The Month
SUPERMAN #25

STRETCHING IT TO THE LIMIT . . . WITH *PLASTIC MAN*

He was the *original* stretchable super-hero of the 1940s, and now **PLASTIC MAN** is back in an all-new, all-zany four-issue mini-series.

How zany is it?

Take the stretchable power of the *really* long arm of the law, add to it his amazing ability to assume any shape under the sun, throw in a liberal dose of sidekick Woozy Winks and some of the wackiest bad guys in town, shake it all up with the creative talents of some of the best that comics has to offer . . . then *double* that and you'll have some idea of what to expect in the pages of the PLASTIC MAN mini-series.

But wacky isn't all you'll find in PLASTIC MAN. There's also slam-bang action, adventure, and pathos . . . all courtesy of writer Phil Foglio, penciller Hilary Barta, and inker John Nyberg . . . not to mention plot and layout assistance from artist Doug Rice, or a series of "reality checks" provided by artist Kevin Nowlan. What's a "reality check"? Well, it's sort of our way of injecting a little bit of the real world into the skewed reality of the realm inhabited by PLASTIC MAN, his friends, and foes.

You're going to have to see it to believe it.

PLASTIC MAN. He's stretching the boundaries of comics to their limits . . . but he's not stopping there.

You will *believe* a man can ply.

WHO IS *THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER?*

He's a soldier. A man who's made a career of following orders, going where he's sent and doing what he's told.

But the times have changed and so has he. The gung-ho career militarist's experiences have made him disillusioned and bitter . . . and his life and the experience of war will never be the same again.

Meet **THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER** . . . but don't expect him to be like any other soldier you've ever met before. And don't expect the 12-issue UNKNOWN SOLDIER maxi-series to be like any other war comic you've ever read. Not by a long shot. Because not only will you be introduced to the horrors of one man's war, but you'll also get to know the man himself as the SOLDIER'S true origin and secrets are revealed over the course of the series. But first he'll have to go through the process of "Looking for Charlie" as his commanders send him to Cambodia and he finds himself trapped between the Viet Cong and a group of deadly arms smugglers.

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER is a 12-issue New Format maxi-series written by Jim Owsley and pencilled by British artist Phil Gascoine. THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER is suggested for mature readers.

They say war is hell. THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER knows that better than any man alive. Before it's over, you'll know it, too.

A *BATMAN* CELEBRATION

There's a little something extra for all fans of **THE BATMAN** this month . . . and we're not just talking about the tale that began last month and continues in the pages of THE BATMAN #427, a special double-sized issue featuring a very special story.

Last month, the story of "A Death in the Family" began as Jason Todd went in search of his mother. His quest continues this month in the second part of this four-part series . . . and before it's over, *you* will be the one to decide who will survive the most incredible BATMAN saga of the year. The ending of this issue features a heart-stopping cliffhanger ending—but the final solution will be left up to you, the reader, to vote on by calling a special 900 telephone number featured at the end of the story.

"A Death in the Family," which runs through THE BATMAN #429, is written by Jim Starlin, with art by Jim Aparo and Mike DeCarlo, and features covers by Mike Mignola.

To celebrate this unique BATMAN event, DC Comics is proud to announce **THE BATMAN CAP**, the next best thing to owning a BATMAN cowl of your own. The BATMAN CAP is a black corduroy baseball cap that prominently features the famous bat symbol in an embroidered yellow oval. It's more than just another baseball cap to keep the rain off your head . . . it's a collector's item you can wear.

And it's all part of the special celebration surrounding the month of THE BATMAN.

Paul Kupperberg, Writer
Peggy May, Editor

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FROM • THE EDITOR

We Need You!!

If you have access to a college or university newspaper, we need your help! We are interested in seeing how college papers cover the comics scene. So, if you see an article on comics—it doesn't have to be about DC Comics, we're interested in reading about other companies, too—please send the article to Peggy May at DC. If you see a comics store advertising in your college newspaper, we'd like to see that, too. Please be sure to indicate the name of the newspaper, college name, frequency of the paper (daily, weekly, whatever) and the date the article or ad appeared. Originals are best but readable copies are great, too.

Thanks for your help. And for your trouble, I'll send you a little something from DC Comics (*and me*).

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Thanks, everyone, for writing in with questions about DC Comics and comments about DIRECT CURRENTS. Thanks also to Ken T., whom I met at the Chicago Comicon in July. It's great to hear how much you like DIRECT CURRENTS!

I know I said I'd feature one letter each month, but, well, so many interesting letters arrived that I've broken my own rule. (And Julia, the designer of DIRECT CURRENTS, agreed to give me some extra space this month so that I can include a couple of letters.) Let's get started.

Dear Ms. May,

In the latest issue of DIRECT CURRENTS, you asked for letters with questions or whatever could pop into our fiendish little minds. Well, let me be one of the first with a question for you.

I am an aspiring writer/artist/creator. And I was wondering how someone might go about proposing ideas for potential stories to DC?

That's my question and may DC prosper.

Sincerely,

O'Brian Tallent
Rt 1 Bx 23
Newport St.
Charleston, TN 37310

Well, O'Brian, you are the first with a question. And it's a question we're asked often. Here are the general guidelines: If you're an artist, send in a few pages of your work—but don't send originals. The pages should show that you can tell a story with your artwork. But whatever you do, don't stop working on your drawing while you wait to hear. (Sometimes it takes months and months. DC is swamped with submissions. Though Vice President-Executive Editor Dick Giordano assures me that every submission is looked at, it can take a really long time.) If you're a writer, send in a two page synopsis of a story idea. Be sure to include your name and address with your submission. Send everything to Dick Giordano at DC Comics. (The address is at the bottom of the second page of DIRECT CURRENTS.) Also, you can bring your work to a convention that has a portfolio viewing room. You'll get immediate feedback that way.

Dear Ms. May,

I would like to know where and/or how I can obtain back issues of DIRECT CURRENTS. I don't know how, but somehow I missed issue number three; I like to collect them, and it would be nice to know where/how to get back issues just in case I happen to miss any in the future.

Stephen Roberts
808 Euclid Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6G 2V4

Dear Stephen:

The good news is that you like DIRECT CURRENTS. The bad news is that it's not possible to get back issues, unless you just happen upon a store that has some extras saved up. If the store where you shop has a "pull and hold" service—where you request books in advance and when the books come in they are set aside for you—perhaps you can arrange for someone at your store to include DIRECT CURRENTS in your order. We have had a number of subscribers ask whether they can subscribe to DIRECT CURRENTS. Would that be of interest to you? Of interest to others? If there's enough demand, we could probably do that and charge some nominal fee, just to cover the shipping and handling. Anyone?

Dear Ms. May,

Thanks for giving me a great opportunity. I have always had questions about comics that sat in the back of my mind that confused me, but I never knew who to ask. Maybe you can help me out.

1) What is the number and letter sequence found on the first page of most comics? For example, on page 1 of SUPERMAN #22 is the sequence G-3839 by his right foot.

2) Why have most standard format books gone up to $1.00? Most likely for economic reasons, but why have others (not that I'm complaining) like SUPERMAN and JLI remained at $.75?

3) Who is the color artist for DC covers? Is it the same colorist for the individual book?

4) Are there any upcoming DC posters and who are the artists?

5) Who is Bové? He did a great job pencilling the Queen Bee and The Parliament of Trees in WHO'S WHO '88 #3. He also got a "special thanks to" in GREEN ARROW #9.

Thanks for listening and I have a suggestion before I go. How about putting a Top Ten of DC Comics in DIRECT CURRENTS?

Anthony Tamaccio
8123 Jeanes St.
Philadelphia, PA 19111

Dear Anthony:

Whew! Let's take 'em one question at a time.

1) The number and letter sequences are used for internal tracking and inventory control at DC. The "G" numbers refer to interior pages, "K" numbers to covers (although that will change soon, since we're running out of numbers), and the "L" to text pieces.

2) There is a serious paper shortage right now, and paper prices have gone through the roof. We're doing our best to keep prices on our books as low as possible, but, yes, the economics of the situation sometimes forces our hand. With the particularly popular books—especially those popular on newsstands—we wait until the last possible moment before resorting to raising prices. You'll be glad to know that we're continuing to research new and better ways to reproduce our material on the paper that is available so that we can bring you great looking books at the lowest possible price.

3) There are four colorists who work on DC covers: Bob Le Rose, Anthony Tollin, Tom Ziuko, and Tatjana Wood.

4) Scheduled to ship in early October is a BLACK ORCHID poster that will be available for sale in comic shops. The book's artist, Dave McKean, painted the poster. Also, look for special full-color fliers on BLACK ORCHID (again, Dave McKean) and THE PRISONER (illustrated by Dean Motter).

5) Steve Bové works in the DC Comics Production Department—and he pencils in his "free" time, when he's not playing softball for the DC Bullets. He was thrilled by your letter and made copies to send to his mom.

We'll look into the possibility of a DC Top Ten for DIRECT CURRENTS. Thanks for the suggestion.

See ya,

Peggy

BOOKS SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 6

☐ **ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #623**
The weekly adventures of your favorite heroes continue, surrounded by a Brent Anderson cover featuring Superman. Inside you'll find Superman by Roger Stern, Curt Swan, and Murphy Anderson; The Phantom Stranger by Paul Kupperberg and José Luis Garcia-Lopéz; Green Lantern by Jim Owsley, Mark Bright, and José Marzan; The Secret Six, by Martin Pasko, Frank Springer, and Frank McLaughlin; Deadman by Mike Baron, Kelley Jones, and Tony DeZuniga; and Shazam! by Roy Thomas, Rick Stasi, and Rick Magyar.

☐ **THE BATMAN #427**
There's going to be "A Death in the Family" . . . and *you* will decide whether Robin will be fatally wounded as his quest continues in this, Part 2 of 4 of the most incredible Batman saga of the year. Written by Jim Starlin, with art by Jim Aparo and Mike DeCarlo. Cover by Mike Mignola.

☐ **THE BATMAN CAP**
It's the next best thing to having a Batman cowl of your own . . . the Batman Cap. It's a black corduroy baseball cap featuring the famous bat symbol in an embroidered yellow oval that's more than just a hat . . . it's a collector's item that you can wear. One size fits all.

☐ **CAPTAIN ATOM #22**
For a former military man, Captain Atom isn't very good at obeying orders as he defies the Justice League International charter to halt a war in Central America . . . and sets off an international incident. Guest-starring Maxwell Lord, Nightshade, and Plastique. Written by Cary Bates, with art by Pat Broderick and Bob Smith. Cover by Broderick.

☐ **COPS™ #5**
Can a Robot die? Blitz, the COPS' cybernetic robo-dog, is about to find out—when tragedy confronts his human master. Written by Doug Moench, with art and cover by Pat Broderick and Pablo Marcos.

☐ **DETECTIVE COMICS #593**
It's not polite to read someone else's diary . . . especially when it's the "Diary of a Madman" like Cornelius Stirk, who's out to tear the Batman's mind apart. Written by John Wagner and Alan Grant, with art and cover by Norm Breyfogle.

☐ **THE NEW GUARDIANS #4**
The Guardians find a new home in the form of the Green Lantern Citadel . . . just in time for it to be invaded by one of Kilowog's newest enemies. Written by Cary Bates, with art by Joe Staton and Mark Farmer. *New Format.*

☐ **THE QUESTION #22**
It's Election Night in Hub City . . . and there's a lot more at stake for Myrna, the Question, and the city than who's going to win the mayoral race. Written by Denny O'Neil, with art by Denys Cowan and Malcolm Jones. Cover by Cowan and Bill Sienkiewicz. *Suggested for Mature Readers. Deluxe Format.*

☐ **THE SPECTRE #21**
Jim Corrigan's detective agency faces its first supernatural challenge and the Spectre confronts the spirit of a long-dead beauty. Written by Doug Moench, with art and cover by Chris Wozniak and Mark Badger. *New Format.*

☐ **SUICIDE SQUAD #20**
Captain Boomerang is the new Mirror Master, right? That's going to make it awfully tough for the not-so-good Captain and Mirror Master to go on a mission *together*. Written by John Ostrander, with art by Luke McDonnell and Bob Lewis. Cover by Karl Kesel.

SUICIDE SQUAD #20

☐ **THE WANDERERS #7**
The Wanderers can't decide whether to join the United Planets or become mercenaries. Can the team survive this dissension in their ranks . . . or is this the end of the Wanderers? Written by Doug Moench, with art and cover by Dave Hoover and Robert Campanella. *New Format.*

☐ **WASTELAND #13**
Don't look behind you . . . they might be gaining. Especially in the Wasteland. This month's madness is brought to you by writers John Ostrander and Del Close and features the art of Don Simpson, Joe Orlando, and new regular Wasteland artist Bill Wray. Painted cover by Timothy Truman. *Suggested for Mature Readers. Deluxe Format.*

BOOKS SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 13

☐ **ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #624**
Black Canary is featured on the cover by Alan Davis, heralding the return of her feature, by Sharon Wright and Randy DuBurke. Also featured are Superman, The Secret Six, Deadman, Green Lantern, and Shazam!

ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #624

☐ **THE BEST OF THE BRAVE & THE BOLD #4**
(of a 6-issue mini-series)
From the pages of The Brave & The Bold comes another quartet of classic stories, featuring The Batman and The Creeper by Bob Haney, Neal Adams, and Dick Giordano (from B&B #80), The Viking Prince by Robert Kanigher and Joe Kubert, Robin Hood by Kanigher and Russ Heath (both from B&B #12), and the Golden Gladiator by Bill Finger and Heath (from B&B #3). Cover by José Luis Garcia-Lopéz. Back cover by Andy Kubert. *Deluxe Format.*

☐ **CHECKMATE #10**
A counterfeiting ring equipped with *real* U.S. Treasury printing plates could produce enough funny money to destroy the world economy . . . unless the Knights of Checkmate make sure the bucks stop here! Written by Paul Kupperberg, with art by John Statema and Al Vey. Cover by Gil Kane. *New Format.*

DOC SAVAGE #3
The saga of "The Discord Makers" continues chaos for Chip Savage as he faces a robot of alien origin in the Himalayas. Doc declares war on Russia. Written by Denny O'Neil, with art by Rod Whigham and Steve Montano. *Deluxe Format.*

FIRESTORM THE NUCLEAR MAN #79
Even Firestorm has limits to his powers . . . but why does he have to learn of these limits during the struggle to save Ron Raymond's father? Written by John Ostrander, with art and cover by Joe Brozowski and Sam De La Rosa.

FLASH #20
Wally West joins the ranks of the homeless when he's evicted and has to spend a weekend on the streets. But Flash isn't all alone, because someone is very interested in his misfortune. Written by William Messner-Loebs, with art and cover by Greg LaRocque and Larry Mahlstedt.

HAWK & DOVE #4
(of a 5-issue mini-series)
Just when Hawk can finally admit that he *needs* Dove's help, she's nowhere to be found. But it's all-out war against Kestrel with or without her. Written by Barbara Kesel and Karl Kesel, with art and cover by Rob Liefeld and K. Kesel.

HAWK & DOVE #4

JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL #2
This is it . . . the showdown between the Justice League, Manga Khan, the Cluster, and the Masters of Apokolips. The only question left is whether Darkseid will bring his own special brand of evil to the festivities. Written by Keith Giffen and J.M. DeMatteis, with art and cover by Ty Templeton and Joe Rubinstein.

MANHUNTER #7
Manhunter is having trouble telling the good guys from the bad guys as he encounters Count Vertigo, a man trying to protect his homeland from Soviet occupation. Written by John Ostrander and Kim Yale, with pencils and cover art by Doug Rice.

V FOR VENDETTA #5
(of a 10-issue maxi-series)
V takes his crusade straight to the people in a desperate attempt to enlighten the masses to government corruption. Will his risk pay off? Written by Alan Moore, with art and painted cover by David Lloyd. *Suggested for Mature Readers. Deluxe Format.*

WONDER WOMAN #24
Gods battle in the center of Boston with Diana stuck in the middle! Written and pencilled by George Pérez and inked by Will Blyberg. Cover by Pérez.

YOUNG ALL-STARS #20
At last . . . learn the secret behind Fury's bond with the Blood Avenger. Written by Roy and Dann Thomas, with art by Michael Bair. Also, the origin of the Flying Fox is told in a story by Thomas and Thomas, with art by Ron Harris and Malcolm Jones. Cover by Bair. *New Format.*

YOUNG ALL-STARS #20

BOOKS SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 20

ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #625
Eduardo Barreto does the cover honors, featuring Deadman. Also featuring the continuing adventures of Black Canary, The Secret Six, Green Lantern, Superman, and Shazam! in the Showcase Presents slot.

DEADSHOT #3
(of a 4-issue mini-series)
Deadshot faces off against Pantha . . . with the fate of Deadshot's son hanging in the balance. Written by John Ostrander and Kim Yale, with art and cover by Luke McDonnell.

DRAGONLANCE™ #2
Riva and Vandar believe they've struck it lucky when they escape a Draconian patrol . . . until they run into an even greater danger right in Riva's own home . . . at the hands of her brother. Written by Dan Mishkin, with art by Ron Randall and Randy Elliott. Cover by Randall. *New Format.*

GREEN ARROW #12
The sequel to *Green Arrow: The Longbow Hunters* concludes with Green Arrow and Shado in Japan for the final face-off with the Yakuza. Written by Mike Grell, with art and cover by Ed Hannigan and Dick Giordano. *Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.*

HAYWIRE #4
The Combine think they've got their man when they smash their way into Steve's apartment in search of the Haywire costume . . . but what they *do* get is the destruction of half the city. Written by Michael Fleisher, with pencils and cover by Vince Giarrano. *Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.*

HELLBLAZER #13
John Constantine is left without a home . . . and without any friends after their deaths in the Newcastle fiasco. All he's got left now are his own inner demons and they might just turn out to be the toughest foes he's ever fought. Written by Jamie Delano, with art by Richard Piers Rayner and Mark Buckingham. Painted cover by Dave McKean. *Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.*

THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #54
The Legion's fighting strength is seriously depleted . . . just in time for a jailbreak on Labyrinth, the prison planet. Can Legion leader Polar Boy handle the pressure? Written by Paul Levitz, with art by Keith Giffen and Mike DeCarlo. Cover by Steve Lightle. *Deluxe Format.*

PLASTIC MAN #1
(of a 4-issue mini-series)
He's back . . . and comics' first stretchable super-hero is slinkier and wackier than ever. Learn who he is and how he came to be, not to mention how he met his bumbling sidekick, Woozy Winks. You will believe a man can ply! Written by Phil Foglio, with art by Hilary Barta and John Nyberg. Cover by Barta.

THE PRISONER #2
(of a 4-book mini-series)
The *new* Prisoner finds herself trapped in The Village where she becomes a pawn in the twenty-year-long life-and-death strug-

gle between the original Number Two and Number Six. Will she succumb to their machinations . . . or will she escape, "By Hook or By Crook"? Written by Dean Motter and Mark Askwith, with art by Motter, and coloring by Dave Hornung. Cover by Motter. *Prestige Format.*

SECRET ORIGINS #34
It's the second issue of the three-issue Origins of the Justice League International mini-series-within-a-series. This issue: the origin of Captain Atom, by Cary Bates and penciller Alan Weiss; Rocket Red, by William Messner-Loebs, with art by Irv Novick and Joe Rubinstein; and Gnort, written by Keith Giffen and J.M. DeMatteis and drawn by Stephen DeStefano. Cover by Jerry Ordway and Ty Templeton.

SUPERMAN #25
At Lex Luthor's command, Brainiac's done more than just get under Superman's skin . . . he's burrowed into the mind of the Man of Steel and he's driving him mad! Written by Roger Stern, with art by Kerry Gammill and John Beatty. Cover by Gammill and Dennis Janke.

TAILGUNNER JO #5
(of a 6-issue mini-series)
Jo's dad is going madder by the minute, but Jo's trapped with him in a cyborg body while they take a harrowing 22,300 mile elevator ride. Written by Peter Gillis, pencilled by Tom Artis, and inked by Joe Rubinstein. Cover by Artis and Rubinstein. *Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.*

BOOKS SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 27

ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #626
Featured on the Gil Kane cover, Nightwing re-joins the Action line-up by Marv Wolfman and Tom Mandrake. Also featured are Black Canary, Shazam!, The Secret Six, Superman, and Green Lantern.

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN #448
Saving a suicidal man is beyond even the Man of Steel's abilities . . . but not Gangbuster's. Also, the Morgan Edge/Lex Luthor war heats up! Written and pencilled by Jerry Ordway and inked by Dennis Janke. Cover by Ordway.

ANIMAL MAN #5
A bizarre drama in the middle of the desert leads Animal Man into his weirdest confrontation yet. Written by Grant Morrison, with art by Chas Truog and Doug Hazlewood. Cover by Brian Bolland. *New Format.*

COSMIC ODYSSEY #3
(of a 4-issue mini-series)
It's time for "Decisions" as the heroes of the ODYSSEY return to New Genesis with their tales of success and failure . . . while Darkseid and Etrigan the Demon go against Highfather's wishes to venture into the Anti-Life itself. Written by Jim Starlin, with art by Mike Mignola and Carlos Garzon. Colored by Steve Oliff. Cover by Mignola. *Prestige Format.*

COSMIC ODYSSEY #3

THE DOOM PATROL #16
At long last, the Doom Patrol is reunited with the Chief . . . just in time for General Immortus and the Animal-Vegetable-Mineral Man to split them asunder. Permanently. Written by Paul Kupperberg, with art by Graham Nolan and Jim Sanders III. Cover by Erik Larsen and Arthur Adams.

FLASH GORDON #8
(of a 9-issue maxi-series)
Mongo is at war as Flash and the Alliance strike out against the Emperor Ming . . . and Ming the Merciless lives up to his name when he strikes back. Written and pencilled by Dan Jurgens and inked by Bruce Patterson. Cover by Jurgens and Patterson. *New Format.*

POWER OF THE ATOM #6
Chronos has been waiting a long time for this, and now that the Atom's back, nothing is going to keep him from going after his oldest foe. Written by Roger Stern, with art by John Byrne and K. S. Wilson. Cover by John Byrne.

THE SHADOW #18
The Shadow is dead, leaving the Avenger at the head of the Shadow's team of agents as they begin a crash course in terminating the corrupt cops of New York . . . Written by Andrew Helfer, with art and cover by Kyle Baker. *Suggested for Mature Readers. Deluxe Format.*

STARMAN #4
Starman isn't the only one possessing incredible powers. In fact, there are six others . . . and the Power Elite wants Starman dead. Written by Roger Stern, with art by Tom Lyle and Bob Smith and cover by Lyle.

SWAMP THING #80
Before they can conquer Earth, an alien race must eliminate the lone threat to their plans of conquest . . . Swamp Thing. Written and pencilled by Rick Veitch and inked by Alfredo Alcala. Cover by Veitch. *Suggested for Mature Readers. New Format.*

THE NEW TITANS #51
"Who is Wonder Girl?" Donna Troy's search for her past and true origin continues in Part 2 of a five-part tale. Also, the Titans have to head into outer space to rescue . . . the Titans? Written by Marv Wolfman, pencilled by George Pérez, and inked by Bob McLeod. Cover by Pérez. *Deluxe Format.*

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER #1
(of a 12-issue maxi-series)
The military sets up the Unknown Soldier in Cambodia as he goes "Looking for Charlie," causing him to be trapped between the Viet Cong and a group of arms smugglers. Also, part one of the Soldier's origin. Written by Jim Owsley, with art by Phil Gascoine. *New Format.*

WARLORD #133
The tale of the Warlord and his adventures in Skartaris reaches its shattering climax as Travis Morgan and his handpicked army go on the march to prevent the very fabric of reality from dissolving. This special 44-page story marks the final issue of the series. Written by Michael Fleisher, with art and cover by Jan Duursema.

WARLORD #133

people at WORK

Dan Jurgens

Dan Jurgens is one of those comic book people who falls into that rapidly expanding category of double-threat creators known as the writer/artist . . . and he can credit serendipity for finding his way into both those jobs. After that, talent took over and, "The rest," as Dan says with a chuckle, "is history."

His history began in 1959 in Minnesota. "I was born in a small town of about 2,000 people, called Ortonville, and it was just about as rural as rural gets," Dan told us. "I grew up and went to school there and did all the smalltown stuff you've ever heard about, including going on hayrides."

He credits the 1966 *Batman* television program with his sparking interest in comics. "I used to watch the TV show, and then I found out there was a comic book about this guy. I had to check that out, and I started picking up my comics on the old drugstore comic book racks. Remember those, before the comics specialty stores?

"I suppose a lot of artists in this business owe their first interest in the medium to Batman. Of all comics' characters, he's about the most visual. There's that certain visual mood of his costume and cape, while most other books at that time tended to look pretty much alike."

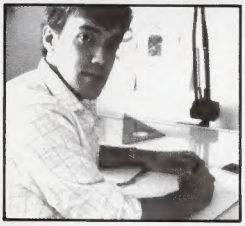
Dan drew throughout his childhood and says, "By the time I was in sixth or seventh grade I got the feeling that I was more than just a doodler. In a community as small as Ortonville, there weren't a lot of other 'doodlers' around and that gave way to the feeling that I was on to something uniquely my own."

When asked if his artistic talents were encouraged by his teachers, Dan laughs. "Well, when it was time to be drawing, like during art class, I was given plenty of encouragement, but if it was in the middle of History 101 and they caught you drawing pictures of instead of studying about the War of 1812, then your butt was in a sling, which certainly happened often enough.

"I also did caricatures of people I shouldn't have been doing, and it certainly wasn't appreciated when those would get into general circulation."

But despite the minor setbacks and reprimands, Dan stuck with his love of art and interest in comics. "I went off to college and studied graphic design and advertising. I was still reading comics, but I'd just about put them aside as a possible field for a career."

Until the first bit of serendipity, when a career in comics was pretty much thrust upon Dan. "That fateful day came when Mike Grell, who was then writing and drawing WARLORD for DC, was doing a personal appearance in Minneapolis, not far from where I was going to school. I went down there to see him and, just for



the heck of it, showed him some of my work. He looked it over and asked me if I wanted to become the new penciller on WARLORD.

"Needless to say, I jumped at the offer. I started out drawing the book with, I believe #63, and stayed on it for about 25 issues.

"Somewhere in there, I was also doing SUN DEVILS, a 12-issue maxi-series that Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway had created for DC. Gerry was scripting the book, but he had to leave it after the first seven issues and that left DC without a writer on the title."

That was the second bit of serendipity. "Well," Dan continued, "since I was the penciller and knew what was going on and where the book was headed, I asked if I could take over writing as well as drawing it.

"That was a real important opportunity for me," Dan remembers. "It enabled me to prove to myself that I could actually put two, if not three words together in a sentence. I think I learned a lot writing those last five issues of SUN DEVILS."

Enough, obviously, to encourage Dan to create his own character and series, BOOSTER GOLD

"I got the inspiration for Booster from watching the 1984 summer Olympics," Dan says. "They were interviewing some young Swedish diver or something, asking her how her career was going now that she was in the games. They wanted to know if she had an agent. She said she did and started describing this whole elaborate process of getting work doing product promotions and the like, and how much more she'd be able to get doing that, especially if she won the gold medal. That started the whole creative process churning for me and out of that came Booster Gold.

"Up 'til then, remember, I'd been doing WARLORD and SUN DEVILS, both very specific genre books. What I wanted to do was a super-hero series that reflected the fun and the spirit that I remembered from the comics I read when I was a kid, and that was what Booster Gold eventually became."

BOOSTER GOLD ran for 24 issues, gathering a loyal following of fans. "After that, it was back into outer space with FLASH GORDON.

"DC had acquired the rights to do a new Flash Gordon series, a fact I didn't know until Mike Gold, the series' editor, called me up and asked me if I wanted to draw the series. It took me completely by surprise, but I accepted the assignment. Naturally, I asked who was going to be writing the book, which was put on the schedule as a nine-issue maxi-series. Mike said they had no idea, so I said, 'How about me?'

"I've always been a big fan of Flash Gordon, Alex Raymond (creator and the first writer/artist on the newspaper strip that spawned the character) and just about everybody else who had ever worked on the strip, so that made it quite a charge for me to work on the series. I went out and hunted down just about everything I could lay my hands on that Flash Gordon had appeared in, from the comic strip to the 1930s Buster Crabbe movie serials, comics, whatever, before I got to work on the series."

Creating something new for a character who's been appearing consistently for over 50 years was a challenge for Dan. "It pretty much boiled down to the fact that Flash Gordon had been done so many times, in so many different forms that I wanted to do something different with him, but not lose sight of who he's been all along. I wanted to remain true to the spirit of Flash Gordon without rehashing things. That was my goal, but I guess it remains for the readers to decide if I succeeded."

Turning out the script and art for a monthly, 24-page comic would be enough for most creators, but Dan also took on the pencilling assignment for the Deadman series that appeared in the first dozen issues of ACTION COMICS WEEKLY. "Deadman's always been one of my favorite characters in the DC Universe, and Mike Baron wrote a wonderful script that I couldn't resist. Each Deadman installment is only 8 pages a week, but that translates into 32 pages a month . . . that's almost a regular comic book and a half right there, a major commitment. Add FLASH GORDON to that and you've got a heavy workload to contend with."

But with the FLASH GORDON maxi-series heading into the homestretch and the first Deadman series wrapped up, it looks as though Dan may have more time on his hands. "Not really," he laughs. "I've got more than enough work to keep me busy. We've already got the first issue of a new METAL MEN series, written by Mike Carlin, completed and I'm hoping that will get going full steam in the near future. The original Metal Men series of the 1960s was a great book and that group was one of the few things in comics that I've always wanted to do. Comics being the neat place it is, I'm finally getting the chance.

"Then there's next year's ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN ANNUAL, which I'm co-writing with Jerry Ordway and pencilling. And, of course, the one project I'm really excited about is something that DC's still got in the planning stages, called THE BLUE AND THE GOLD, a new series starring Booster Gold with the Blue Beetle. They've gotten real popular as buddies in Justice League International, so I think a book co-starring the two of them is a natural. It's going to have that unique JLI flavor to it."

Dan Jurgens has managed to accumulate an impressive body of work since that "fateful day" he decided to make the trip to Minnesota to meet Mike Grell.

Isn't serendipity an amazing thing?

PLASTIC MAN

From the archives of the DC Comics Library, we bring you the cover of PLASTIC MAN #1 { 1966 }.

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